

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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TAGS: ENRG, PBIO, NI, OPEC

SUBJ: BIODATA OF NEW OPEC SECRETARY GENERAL

REF: VIENNA 10359

SUMMARY: CHIEF M. O. FEYIDE, WHO HAS BEEN NAMED OPEC SEC GEN

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FOR TWO-YEAR TERM BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 1975, IS BY FAR THE

MOST QUALIFIED NIGERIAN WHO COULD HAVE BEEN NAMED TO THE POST. JUDGING FROM THE WAY HE HAS RUN THE NIGERIAN DEPARTMENT OF PETROLEUM RESOURCES FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS, HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO DEMAND A HIGH DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER HIS STAFF AND THEIR ACTIVITIES. HE HAS RELATIVELY LITTLE EXPERIENCE WITH ADMINISTERING RESEARCH AND WITH PUBLIC RELATIONS, SO HIS OVERALL PERFORMANCE AS SECGEN IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT. FEYIDE HAS ENJOYED REASONABLY GOOD RELATIONS WITH US AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL OIL COMPANIES OVER THE YEARS, AND, FROM CONSUMER COUNTRIES' POINT OF VIEW, HE IS PROBABLY AS GOOD A CHOICE AS ANY OPEC COULD HAVE MADE. END SUMMARY
END LOU; BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. CHIEF M. O. FEYIDE WAS BORN MARCH 31, 1926, IN IPELE, WESTERN STATE, NIGERIA. HIS CHIEFTAINCY, FOR WHICH THE OFFICIAL TITLE IS OLANLA OF IPELE, BEARS CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE YORUBA REGION OF HIS BIRTH AND, LIKE MANY OTHER NIGERIAN CHIEFTAINCIES, GIVES THE BEARER OF THE TITLE CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL RESPECT, BUT IT HAS NO NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. HIS PERSONAL NAMES ARE MESHACH OTOKITI, BUT THE INITIALS ARE INvariably USED. WRITTEN AND ORAL FORMS OF ADDRESS ARE CHIEF FEYIDE OR CHIEF M. O. FEYIDE (PRONOUNCED FAY-EE'-DAY). HE HAS TWO BRITISH DEGREES: ONE IN MINING ENGINEERING FROM CAMBOURNE SCHOOL OF MINES AND THE SECOND IN PETROLEUM ENGINEERING FROM IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. HE IS MARRIED.

2. EXCEPT FOR BREAKS FOR FURTHER EDUCATION, HE HAS BEEN A CAREER CIVIL SERVANT IN THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF MINES AND POWER SINCE 1946. HE WORKED AT FIRST AS A MINING ENGINEER, BUT CONVERTED TO PETROLEUM ENGINEERING SOON AFTER OIL WAS DISCOVERED IN 1956. HE WAS APPOINTED CHIEF PETROLEUM ENGINEER IN 1964, THE FIRST AND ONLY NIGERIAN TO HOLD THAT POST. HIS TITLE WAS CONVERTED TO DIRECTOR OF PETROLEUM RESOURCES IN 1970. HE HAS THUS HAD FULL LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL OIL AND GAS MATTERS, INCLUDING DOMESTIC DISTRIBUTION, ALMOST SINCE THE BIRTH OF NIGERIA AS AN OIL PRODUCING COUNTRY. HE HAS ALSO BEEN CHAIRMAN OF NIGERIA'S ONLY REFINERY (NPRC) AND A DIRECTOR OF NIGERIAN NATIONAL OIL CORPORATION (NNOC) AND NIGERIAN AGIP OIL COMPANY (NAOC). HE IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WIDELY TRAVELLED, HAVING MADE VISITS TO THE US IN 1964, 1973 (STATE 090198), AND 1974. HE WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE OPEC BOARD OF GOVERNORS IN 1972 AND ATTENDED THE DETROIT MEETING OF WORLD ENERGY CONFERENCE IN 1974.

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3. CHIEF FEYIDE IS CLEARLY THE NIGERIAN OFFICIAL WITH THE

LONGEST AND GREATEST EXPERIENCE IN PETROLEUM MATTERS. UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, NIGERIAN OIL PRODUCTION HAS RISEN FROM ABOUT 100,000 BARRELS PER DAY IN 1964 TO RANK EIGHTH IN THE WORLD IN PRODUCING CAPACITY. AS THE OFFICIAL MOST DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE, HE MUST SHARE CREDIT OR BLAME FOR ALL PETROLEUM POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENTS OF THE LAST DECADE, AND THESE HAVE GENERALLY IF NOT ALWAYS BEEN CONSISTENT WITH US INTERESTS. ALTHOUGH THE HIGHEST RANKING OFFICIAL EXCLUSIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR OIL AND GAS, HE HAS OF COURSE SHARED POLICY-MAKING WITH THE PERMANENT SECRETARY AND POLITICAL HEAD OF THE MINISTRY. FEYIDE HAS SURVIVED MANY CHANGES OF SUPERIORS DURING THE PAST TEN YEARS. FEYIDE IS WELL REGARDED BY THE POL COMPANIES HERE AND HAS CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATED A PRAGMATIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE COMPANIES' ROLE. HE RARELY SEEKS THEIR ADVICE, BUT HE IS WILLING TO LISTEN AND TO BE PERSUADED.

4. FEYIDE'S STYLE IS QUIET AND UNOBTRUSIVE. HIS SUBORDINATES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PETROLEUM RESOURCES APPARENTLY OWE HIM A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF PERSONAL LOYALTY. IN ANY EVENT, THEY ARE CLOSELY DISCIPLINED AND, LIKE FEYIDE, ARE RARELY IF EVER INDISCREET. FEYIDE DELIBERATELY AVOIDS PUBLICITY AND MAKES RELATIVELY FEW APPEARANCES AT PUBLIC OR SOCIAL FUNCTIONS. IF ANYTHING IS LACKING IN HIS PREPARATION FOR THE OPEC SECRETARY GENERALSHIP IT IS EXPERIENCE WITH PUBLIC AFFAIRS. HE HAS ALSO HAD NO EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA WITH THE SOPHISTICATED KIND OF ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH NOW BEING UNDERTAKEN BY OPEC. BECAUSE HE IS SENSITIVE TO REAL OR IMAGINED SLIGHTS, IN DEALINGS WITH FEYIDE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO OBSERVE STRICT PROTOCOL, AND CARE SHOULD BE OBSERVED NOT TO GIVE HIM REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HIS POSITION IS NOT BEING RESPECTED OR THAT HE IS BEING SIDESTEPED.

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5. COMMENT: FEYIDE IS BEYOND DOUBT THE BEST OF THE EXTREMELY LIMITED NUMBER OF NIGERIANS QUALIFIED TO BE NAMED SECRETARY GENERAL. HIS PAST RECORD OF FAIRMINDEDNESS AUGURS WELL FOR THE NEW SECRETARY GENERAL'S OPENNESS TO CONSUMER COUNTRIES' IDEAS DURING HIS TWO-YEAR TERM OF OFFICE, BUT OPEC HEADQUARTERS UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO BECOME ANY MORE ACCESSABLE. HIS ABILITY TO ADMINISTER AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND TO BECOME ITS SPOKESMAN CANNOT BE JUDGED IN ADVANCE.

6. FEYIDE'S DEPARTURE FROM NIGERIA LEAVES A VACUUM OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE. CONSIDERED WITH THE CHANGE-OVER OF COMMISSIONERS

EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE BY THE END OF THE YEAR, THERE IS CERTAIN TO BE A CHANGE OF STYLE IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF OIL

AND GAS MATTERS, EVEN THOUGH NO POLICY CHANGE IS ANTICIPATED.
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